



Town of Westford

Massachusetts

Town Manager's Newsletter

December 2022



Jodi Ross,
Town
Manager

jross@westfordma.gov
www.westfordma.gov/tm

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**No one-day delay for trash
and recycling pick-up
during Holidays**

**Tuesday, January 24, 2PM
Deadline for Petition
Articles To Town Clerk's
Office**

**Saturday, March 25, 10AM
Annual Town Meeting
Westford Academy**

Happy Holidays!



Watch
westford CAT
community access television
www.westfordcat.org

Dear Westford residents,

It is with a bit of sadness that I write my last Town Manager newsletter to you. I started this tradition way back in October 2008 during my second month with our town. It started small, with perhaps just a letter from me, and then grew substantially through the years to become filled with news and events from many town departments and boards. Thank you for your generous support, not only of this newsletter, but of me as your Town Manager for the past 14 ½ years. It has truly been my pleasure to serve you. I feel blessed to have been able to do what I love every day as my job and do it for such an extraordinary town and its residents. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. I will miss you all.

In accordance with my retirement, on December 10th the Select Board interviewed three candidates to consider appointing as our new Town Manager, and voted 4-1 to offer Kristen Las, the current Assistant Town Manager in Shrewsbury, the position as Westford's new Town Manager, subject to a background check and contract negotiations. Please join me in congratulating Kristen on this accomplishment.

Our town has revised our solid waste and recycling collection schedule for the week of Monday, December 26th to Friday, December 30th and Monday, January 2nd to Friday, January 6th. **There will be no one-day delay during these weeks.** We appreciate your patience and understanding.

At the Select Board's December 13th meeting, I presented the Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Message to the Select Board, School Committee, and Finance Committee. To review the budget message and view a copy of my presentation, you may visit this link: [Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Information](#). Joint budget hearings between the Select Board, School Committee, and Finance Committee will begin on Thursday, January 12th and you may visit the following link to view the meeting schedule: [Board and Committees Meeting Calendar](#).

The Select Board continued their review of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) projects approved, funding spent and funding available to date, and voted 5-0 to approve the following projects:

#	Description	Amount
3	Gasoline / Diesel Fuel Supplemental Appropriation (for all Town Fleet)	\$ 50,000
4	Supplemental Appropriation for the Electronic Vote Tabulators for Town Meeting	\$ 8,525
7	Building Department Hybrid Vehicle Supplemental Appropriation	\$ 7,939
8	Supplemental Appropriation for Unanticipated FY23 School Bus Transportation Costs	\$ 151,752.57
9	Programs to Promote Social Emotional Health for Students and Staff in Westford Public Schools: * Educational materials supporting trauma-sensitive classroom * Anxiety support groups for grades 3-5 * "Calming Kits" for PK-5 classrooms	\$ 49,250
10	Supplemental Funding Request for One Ton Dump Truck with Plow	\$ 4,509.11
11	GIS System Upgrades	\$ 5,000
12	Entry Level Commercial Driver's License Training	\$ 21,900
13	FY24-26 Rental, Mortgage and Utility Assistance	\$ 6,000
Subtotal:		\$ 304,875.68

The total funding approved to date is \$4,451,886.30. The total amount of unspent funds remaining is \$2,966,084.54. All ARPA documents are available to view at the following link: [ARPA Funding](#).

(Continued on next page)

WWW.WESTFORDMA.GOV

The board voted to open the 2023 Annual Town Meeting Warrant which is schedule to take place on Saturday, March 25th, 2023 at 10:00a.m. in the Westford Academy gymnasium. To review the timeline, please visit the following link: [2023 Annual Town Meeting Timeline](#).

The Select Board approved a request from the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee for a proclamation which adopts a working definition of anti-Semitism, proclaiming January 27th as "International Holocaust Remembrance Day", and recognizes the month of January as "Holocaust Education Month". The proclamation may be viewed at this link: [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Proclamation](#)

At the Select Board's meeting on November 29th, the board heard a request from the Parks and Recreation Commission to consider building a dog park located on Carlisle Road, Parcel ID 007 0009 0000, behind the Jack Walsh Recreation Area. The Select Board had safety and noise concerns, and also wanted to hear an opinion from our Town Engineer on traffic impacts, and our Director of Land Use Management on any permits/variances which may be required. The board also requested more information from other towns with dog parks. Select Board Member Hazelton will work with the Commission to further research these inquiries.

The Select Board has approved their 2023 meeting calendar which may be found at the following link: [Select Board 2023 Meeting Calendar](#).

Continuing a fun holiday tradition, on Monday, December 5th, the Select Board, Assistant Town Manager Eric Heideman, Town Clerk Patty Dubey, Community Wellness Coordinator Nicole Laviolette and I cooked and served breakfast to our seniors at the Cameron Senior Center. We prepared scrambled eggs, pancakes, sausages, home fries, English muffins, bagels, pastries, and assorted fruit which we shared with our neighbors and friends.



Once again during this holiday season, our town staff are busy decorating their department's doors throughout the town hall and at several offsite locations. Please stop by our departments and enjoy our festive displays.

I would like to remind town residents and visitors of the Winter Parking Ban in accordance with c. 199 §23 of the Westford Town Code, there is no on-street parking longer than one hour between 1:00 AM and 8:00 AM from November 1st to April 1st. There is to be no on-street parking of any kind during a snowstorm or following a storm while cleanup is taking place. The Public Works Department's heavy equipment operators and we greatly appreciate your efforts in keeping your property safe, and allowing our drivers to more easily be able to maneuver our large sanders and plows down our narrow roads.

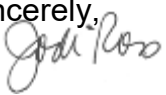
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There are several openings on our local boards and committees, including: 35 Town Farm Road Task Force, Affordable Housing Trust, Agricultural Commission, Board of Cemetery Commissioners, Bylaw Review Committee, Capital Planning Committee, Commission on Disability, Council on Aging, Cultural Council, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee, Dog Park Task Force, Economic Development Committee, Election Officer, Healthy Westford Committee, Housing Authority, Parks and Recreation Commission, Pedestrian Safety Committee, Permanent Town Building Committee, Scholarship and Grant Committee, Senior Low Income Disabled Tax Relief Committee, Tax Possession Sale Committee, Town and School Safety Task Force, and Zoning Board of Appeals. I urge you to peruse our website for information about the work of these committees; and if you have interest, please complete and submit a Citizen's Activity form at this link: [Citizen Activity Form](#).

Would you like more detailed information on the Select Board's meetings? Click the following links to access: [Select Board Documents](#) & [Select Board Meeting Videos](#).

Thank you again for your kindness and support and I wish you all a very peaceful, joyful holiday season!

Sincerely,



Jodi Ross



Westford Selectboard members (l-r): Andrea Peraner-Sweet, Scott Hazelton, Anita Tonakarn-Nguyen, Thomas Clay, and John Cunningham.

Westford Schools

Superintendent Chew's December 1st message to WPS families:

Welcome to December. It definitely feels more like winter.

I hope the Thanksgiving break brought opportunities for some rest. November flies by each year and we quickly find ourselves with only a few more weeks until the winter break. Those weeks tend to be very high energy and packed with activity both in and out of school. Make sure to pace yourselves!

Teacher conferences were held last month before the Thanksgiving holiday for all of our Prk-8 families. The ability to offer both in person and virtual conferences was very well received and we are grateful to be able to provide that opportunity for access. Since classes were in session on the days of the conferences as a change this year, the elementary slots were adjusted to 10 minutes from the previous 15 minutes more similar to the middle school slots. We received some feedback with concerns about the decreased amount of time and will certainly take that into consideration as we plan for next year. As a reminder, all families can always reach out to their respective schools to request meetings to discuss student progress throughout the year.

Our Feasibility Study is well underway at present. The consultants from SMMA working with us have been visiting all of our schools and collecting copious amounts of data. Their work will help us develop a more detailed master plan for our district that best supports our educational goals and priorities incorporating our overall demographics, space utilization, grade configurations, the organization and districting of our elementary and middle schools, and the facilities needs within each of the buildings. Part of the study will also include opportunities for family feedback in the January/February time frame after some initial data regarding current facility needs are calculated. That initial data will determine the focus to where family feedback will be most helpful. This study will be concluded in the spring and will include public presentations providing us updated information as to how we can best use the resources we currently have and projects that we can consider to support us moving forward.

Finally, if you weren't able to participate in the webinar regarding our Strategy for District Improvement and our priority areas for our next Strategic District Improvement Plan, you can access the recording using this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Et6adB6jJOA>

Cheers!

Chris

Christopher Chew, Ed.D
Superintendent
Westford Public Schools



Westford's Veterans Day Honors

Westford held a lovely Veterans Day ceremony on the Common on a sunny Friday morning, Nov. 11 organized by VSO Ryan Cobleigh that was well attended by residents, Boy and Girl Scouts, Westford Academy buglers and band members, and many local veterans and their loved ones. Thank you to the Westford PD and Westford FD for their assistance that day and their dedication to honoring our veterans.

A moving speech was given by guest speaker John Kennedy, retired Chief Petty Officer of the US Navy Seabees, who reflected on his experiences as an Irish immigrant, his Seabee training and deployment to Kuwait and Iraq, and the bond shared by all men and women in uniform. Select Board member Andrea Peraner-Sweet shared thoughtful remarks to express our gratitude to all who serve, and Chaplain Arthur Pellerin gave the opening prayer and benediction. Thank you to everyone who made the day so meaningful and for taking the time to honor our veterans. For the second year, photo placards of local veterans were placed around the Common. Please contact Westford Remembers for info on getting a sign for your veteran loved one and thank them for this great tribute.



Guest Speakers Wanted and Welcomed at Veterans Day and Memorial Day

Westford Veterans Services would like to involve more veterans and their loved ones in the town's annual Memorial Day and Veterans Day observances by featuring them as guest speakers. Veterans and their loved ones who would like to share their thoughts on service and sacrifice, the importance of honoring our vets, or recounting the unique stories and military experiences of their veteran loved ones and the kind of people they were can help us all better understand and gratefully appreciate what Veterans Day and Memorial Day are truly about. Please contact Veterans Service Officer Ryan Cobleigh at 978-692-1170 or Email: Veterans@WestfordMA.gov



Sustainability – Sue Thomas, [Sustainability Coordinator](#), 978-399-2798

Going Green at the Westford Academy Bazaar and at Home this Holiday Season

It was my pleasure to meet so many interested and engaged residents at the Westford Academy Bazaar. Many thanks to [Westford Climate Action](#) for hosting a booth to highlight sustainability issues big and small, from [sustainable gift giving](#), [wrapping](#), and [tree selection and decorating](#), to [going solar](#) and buying renewable electricity at bargain rates offered through the [Westford Pop Community Aggregation Program](#). Whether you were able to stop by or not, I hope you will find some time to check out [this excellent guide](#) to a clean energy home from the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center, which outlines many steps to take in the year ahead to give yourself and the climate the gift of efficient and clean energy. Both the [state](#) and [federal](#) government are offering impressive incentives to households to make this transition. Feel free to reach out to me at any time with questions.

If shopping is your focus this time of year, the Bazaar was a great environmental choice. It supports a plethora of local businesses, craftspeople, and students and highlights beautiful and functional upcycled or sustainably sourced items for sale, from ornaments to mittens, including wood, ceramic and textile products, all providing great and often heirloom alternatives to plastics, and giving us a gentle nudge to reduce our waste stream. A triple win! Make a resolution to buy local, reusable or repurposed and sustainably sourced items this season, and in the years ahead.

For many people food is the highlight of this event and the season. If winter celebrations have you hungry for a new oven, or recent research and events have you questioning the [safety of your gas stove](#), replace it with an induction oven and get a [\\$500 Mass Save rebate](#). Chefs and homeowners who have tried this technology rave about the cooking experience, as well as the environmental benefits.

Education is of course a big part of the Bazaar. I was thrilled to visit the Westford Academy Environmental Club booth and discover that they had upcycled paper and cardboard waste into paper journals with artful covers and rooted jade plant leaves into baby plants perfect for beginner indoor gardeners. This selection quietly illustrated the importance of incorporating plants and their health benefits into our interior spaces and demonstrated that gift giving can be sustainable. The club clearly understand zero waste concepts and the importance of thinking about the life cycle of the products we consume. They also have the skills to bring these ideas to fruition in time for the bazaar. Follow their example and think about how you might incorporate both more of the natural world and recycled products into your life in 2023, so both can continue to thrive.

By the time you read this the Bazaar will be finished for another year, and soon the holiday season will have flown by as well. Don't forget to reference the Westford Recycling Commission's comprehensive [How to Recycle Most Anything](#) guide for proper disposal of those things that you no longer need going into the new year.

Most winter customs remind us that light, and plants, and all the life they support together, will come back with the turn of the season. Our traditions and habits can help ensure this continues to be true. In keeping with the spirit of the holiday, please make a resolution to adopt a new behavior for the health of our planet. My very best wishes for a joyous and restorative holiday!



December at the J.V. Fletcher Library



From the Director: the Library Building Project, please visit the [Library's website](#).



Unless otherwise noted, the following programs are made possible by the Friends of the Library.

Director's Corner: Wishing everyone a safe, healthy and family-filled holiday season throughout December! The Library Holiday closings and open hours are:

- Closed Saturday, December 24 [Christmas Eve]
- Closed Sunday, December 25 [Christmas Day]
- Closed Monday, December 26 [Christmas Day observed]
- Open Saturday, December 31 from 10am – 5pm.

Look for our fun-filled holiday programs for the entire family!

Friends of the Library READ magnets: Looking for last minute stocking stuffers? The Friends of the Library will be selling these fun car/magnets at the Library. The purchase price is \$5.00. The Friends of the Library fund library programs, museum passes, and so much more!



VIRTUAL Holiday Favorites - The Most Wonderful Songs of The Year: Wednesday, December 14 at 11:00 a.m. Hearing holiday music can instantly fill our minds with the smell of pine, the taste of eggnog, and the warmth of a bright burning fire, but did you know that Jingle Bells was originally meant to be a Thanksgiving song? Discover the story behind some of your holiday favorites while we learn why they truly are the most wonderful songs of the year. Dan Lupo, creator of [FiveMinuteMozart.com](#), a music education platform with over 2 million views and 20k+ subscribers, will present a fascinating music education program that consists of a spoken lecture as well as live performances. [Register here.](#)

Holiday Sing Along with Steve Blunt, Thursday, December 15 at 10:30 a.m. Celebrate the season with musician Steve Blunt – we will be ringing jingle bells, dancing, singing along, and covering as many December holidays as we can. [Registration for this free program opens on Nov. 28.](#) This program is for all ages.

Tweens and Teens Crafternoon – Drop-In Card Making: Monday, December 19 from 2:00-4:00 p.m. Join Jess for a drop-in crafternoon to create cards for your friends & loved ones. We will also make extra cards to be given to Westford community members in need of extra cheer. Open to anyone in Grade 5 through Grade 12. No registration required.

Monday Mystery Book Club: Mon., Dec. 19 at 2:00 p.m. We'll meet in the Mary Atwood Room. We'll be discussing *The Thursday Murder Club*, by Richard Osman. Print copies are available at Main Desk. Email Kristina at kleedberg@westfordma.gov for details.

Pajama Story Time: Mon., Dec. 19 at 6:30 p.m. Pajama Time meets once a month on a Monday evening in the Meeting Room for children ages 3 to 7. Get into those pajamas and grab a favorite stuffed animal or blanket and come on in!

VIRTUAL JOB SEARCH HELP FOR 50 & OVER – JOB SEARCH HELP FOR 50 & OVER – Networking 2.0 "You must Give/Get": Wednesday, December 21, 9:30-11:30 a.m. The Massachusetts Library Collaborative 50+ Job Seekers Group meets on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of the month, from 9:30am to 11:30am, via Zoom. If you are unemployed and actively looking, underemployed, seeking a new career direction, re-entering the job market after a long employment gap, or recently retired and looking for your "Encore Career", this networking group program is perfect for you! [Register here.](#) **(continued on next page)**

December at the J.V. Fletcher Library (Continued)

6th Annual 9-Hole Mini Golf in the Library: Wednesday, December 28 from 11 to 2 p.m. It's back - a nine hole (and a bonus hole) mini-golf course all over the library - here is something to do with the whole family during the holiday break. This free drop-in program is generously funded by the KDK Memorial Foundation (in honor of Kurt Kelly). Sign up for a convenient time slot from our Event calendar.

Teen and Tweens - Improv with Little Spark Theater: Thursday, Dec. 29 at 1:30 p.m. We're happy to welcome back Ali from Little Spark Theater on Thursday, December 29th. This program is perfect for the theater pro or newbie. We'll explore the basics of improvisation and acting through high-energy games, so get ready for some antics, shenanigans, and a ridiculously fun time! This program is for grades 6-12. [Register here.](#)

Overdrive/Libby Update: As of **January 4, 2023**, you will need to enter your library PIN to access your OverDrive/Libby account for eBooks, eAudiobooks and other OverDrive resources. All MVLC libraries are implementing this change to improve security and to better protect patron privacy. The PIN is the same password that you use to sign into your account in the library catalog. If you don't know your PIN or you have questions, please contact the Information Desk at 978-399-2304.

Math Club: Wednesday, 12/28 from 3:30-5:00 p.m. Join YA Librarian Jess and library volunteer Patrick for a meeting of mathematical minds. Each meeting we will learn theories, solve problems, and build upon your math knowledge with fun activities and games. For Grades 6-8. [Register here.](#)

Friends of the Library e-newsletter: The best way to learn about our upcoming programs and new services is through the FOL weekly e-newsletter. [Sign up here.](#)

Check out our [Museum Passes page](#) or call the Library for reservations. Unless otherwise noted, our museum passes are generously funded by the Friends of the Library. [Have you joined the Friends yet?](#)

Quick Links to Our Most Popular Services!

[Programs – Adults](#)

[Programs – Kids](#)

[Programs – Young Adults](#)



**If you have questions or need assistance, please call us at
978-399-2300 or send us an email at
westfordlibrary@westfordma.gov.**

Cameron Senior Center

Cameron offers much to do on those cold wintery days - Join Us!



Lowell Regional Transit Authority Partners with Cameron for "Try Transit Month"

In an effort to introduce public transportation to the community, the Lowell Regional Transit Authority has deemed December 2022 as "Try Transit Month." All rides on LRTA transportation **will be free** for the month of December, including through the Transportation Department of the Westford Council on Aging. We would like to extend our sincerest gratitude to the LRTA as well as to encourage all of you who have never tried our service to give the Transportation Department a call at: 978-399-2322 to see if we can help serve your transportation needs. Enjoy your Holiday Season!

Rep. Jim Arciero Secures Needed \$25,000 Funding for WIFI Connectivity Project

The COA and Westford Housing Authority were relieved to learn that a legislative earmark had been granted to provide very basic WIFI connectivity for each of our housing communities that are managed by the WHA. Rep. Jim Arciero was joined by Town manager, Jodi Ross, local leadership, WHA Resident's Committee Members, COA and Friends of the Cameron Board Members.



Westford Special Needs Emergency Registry Sign-up

Westford Health Department and Emergency Management maintains a registry for residents all ages.- infants- seniors- who live in homes and who have special cognitive, developmental, mental health, sensory and mobility disabilities, chronic conditions, and/or other special healthcare needs. Residents of assisted living facilities or nursing homes have staff to assist first responders. By participating in the registry, you permit Emergency Management and the Westford health department to share your information with local, state emergency responders such as town police and/or fire departments. The registry allows first responders and emergency management officials to plan, prepare for, and to respond to the needs of the community in an emergency though assistance can't be guaranteed.

If you would like to complete a form to be added to the Westford Special Needs Emergency Registry please contact the Cameron-978.692.5523 and/or Health Department- 978-692-5509 because we can assist you in this simple process.

SECOND ANNUAL HANUKKAH LUNCH

Wednesday, December 21, 12 noon

Come join Martha and Cindy as they again serve traditional Hanukkah latkes (potato pancakes), kugel (noodle pudding) and bagels with cream cheese. Come have a little nosh with your friends and enjoy some traditional music. RSVP to 978.692.5523



COOKIES & COCOA BY THE FIREPLACE

Thursday, December 22, 10am

Join Katie in the library by the fireplace and enjoy some hot cocoa and cookie decorating. Call to sign up at 978.692.5523.

(Continued on next page)

Cameron Senior Center (Continued)

FIRST FRIDAYS with PURPLE HYDRANGEA

Friday, January 6th starting at 1:00PM

Olivia Evans is a Certified Dementia Practitioner who will be providing six 20 minute 1:1 office sessions here the first Friday of every month. Her company, Purple Hydrangea, offers 1:1 dementia caregiver support, symptom management coaching, home safety assistance, advance care education, goal creation, activity planning and resources/referrals. Please call our front desk at 978.692.5523 to sign up for a slot. Our EOE grant will subsidize the cost for Nov/ Dec. Any questions ask for Annette or Alison.



Offerings You May Consider Joining

Restaurant Review- Wednesday, December 28th at 11:30AM

Enjoy trying a new restaurant or looking for some engaging conversation by joining this monthly group at **99, Route 110 Westford**. All you need to do is pre-register by calling the Cameron at 978-692-5523.

Music Makers

Friday Mornings at 9AM

Come One and All and sing with the Music Makers. We welcome returning singers as well as folks who would enjoy a musical morning. Music Makers is led by Tom Boyer and all you need to do is show up.

Monthly Movie Showing

December 15th at 4:30

Join us for the comical movie, "**Grumpier Old Men**" you can be assured there will many laughs. Movie Ticket is \$4 and comes with complimentary popcorn, , refreshments and light meal please RSVP to 978-692-5523.

The UPBEATS

Our house band is welcoming anyone who is experienced at playing instrument. We practice each Thursday morning at 10AM so bring your instrument and play with this talented group if musicians. NO RSVP necessary

Ping Pong

Come join an avid group of ping pong players, varying in skill from beginner to advanced. It is a fun group of people who really enjoy ping pong and one another. Please RSVP- 978-692-5523.

Sewing and Quilting Clubs

Mondays- 10AM- 1PM and/or Tuesdays 9AM-11AM

Please come in and enjoy working on your knitting or quilting projects with many other friendly crafters.

Cribbage Wednesdays at 12:30pm

Hand and Foot (Canasta) Thursdays at 12:30

Bridge Thursdays at 2:30PM

To learn more about the Cameron Senior Center programs and services please visit:

www.westfordma.gov/coa,

[www.facebook.com/Cameron Senior Center/](https://www.facebook.com/Cameron-Senior-Center/)

www.youtube.com/channel/UCaNgAZb3tw8EYYQ5bEe7XXq

or simply call 978-692-5523.



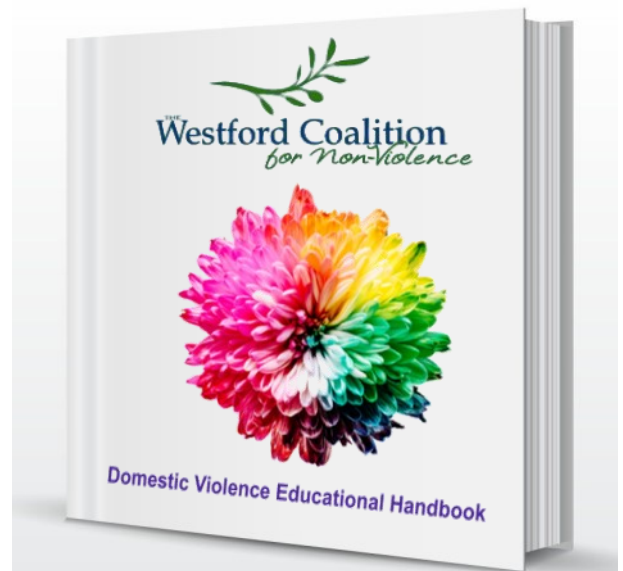
Westford Senior Center

Community Wellness

The Westford Coalition for Non-Violence is a group of residents, town employees, survivors, and professionals, who have joined together to promote non-violent resolution to conflict. The Coalition has revised the Domestic Violence Educational handbook. As a resource and support for residents the booklets are available through the Health Department or Community Wellness Department. For a copy of the booklet, please contact Gail Johnson, Westford's Public Health Nurse, the Chair of the Coalition @ gjohnson@westfordma.gov or Nicole Laviolette, Community Wellness Coordinator @ nlaviolette@westfordma.gov.

Resource Guide:

The Town of Westford Resource guide was recently updated. We have created this guide to assist Westford residents in accessing resources and support services. Residents are always welcome to connect with the Town Social Services/ Senior Outreach Coordinators, School Counselors, or Wellness Staff for support. The guide provides a means for residents to help themselves if they are more comfortable doing so. Please understand that this guide is not all-inclusive of topics or of agencies. Inclusion does not imply a recommendation or endorsement of the listed services. We have tried to include the topics most relevant to our residents and the resources that are geographically closest to Westford. If there are areas that you would like to see covered that are not currently, please notify the Community Wellness Coordinator or Social Worker. Please click here to access the guide: [Westford Resource Guide](#)



For more information about the Community Wellness Department, please visit <https://www.westfordma.gov/1487/Community-Wellness>
Nicole Laviolette, Community Wellness Coordinator
978-399-2503 nlaviolette@westfordma.gov

Health Department



The Westford Health Department is participating in a collaborative Public Health Excellence Grant which includes Westford, Acton, Dracut, and Lowell, MA.

Our shared Regional Community Health and Wellness Coordinator (RCHWC), Brittany Nash is a Youth Mental Health First Aid Instructor. Our RCHWC has provided the Youth Mental Health First Aid training to Westford, Acton, Dracut, and Lowell, MA communities. From July 2022 to the present time 70 individuals have been able to receive this training with the support/funding of community partners. Brittany Nash was recently awarded the 2022 GLCF Strengthening Mental Health Support for Children and Adolescents in Greater Lowell grant. With the support of the newly awarded grant, Brittany will continue to offer the Youth Mental Health First Aid training to the community free of charge.

The Youth Mental Health First Aid training teaches adults how to identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental health and substance use challenges among children and adolescents ages 12-18.

Just as CPR helps an individual with a heart attack, Youth Mental Health First Aid helps to assist children and adolescents ages 12-18 experiencing a mental health or substance use related crisis. In the Youth Mental Health First Aid course, you learn risk factors and warning signs for mental health and addiction concerns, strategies for how to help the youth in both crisis and non-crisis situations, and where to turn for help.

For upcoming training information:
Contact Brittany Nash at bnash@westfordma.gov

Mental Health Resources

If you or someone you know is in immediate danger or experiencing a medical emergency
Call 911

<https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/mental-health-resources/>

Health Department (continued)

SUBSTANCE USE AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

FIND HELP AND TREATMENT

HELPLINES

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

Call or text 988 or chat 988lifeline.org.

SAMHSA's National Helpline

1-800-662-HELP (4357)

Text your zip code to: 435748 (HELP4U)

Disaster Distress Helpline

1-800-985-5990

Veterans Crisis Line

Dial 988 then press 1

Text: 838255

LOCATORS

Substance Use Treatment Locator

Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator

Early Serious Mental Illness Treatment Locator

Recycling Commission

The Truth About Plastics Recycling

The source for this information is 'The Recycling Partnership – By the Numbers Webinar unpacking the data behind plastics recycling'



We need to talk.

We know you've seen the headlines that plastic recycling is a "dead end" or, even worse, "a dumpster fire," and we know you've got questions. This month, we are setting the record straight. **Plastics recycling is real and is happening in Massachusetts.** News stories that say otherwise aren't telling the whole story and don't reflect the reality of recycling in our state.

Recycling in Massachusetts:

Massachusetts is home to nine Materials Recovery Facilities (MRFs) where more than 638,000 tons of plastic containers, paper, bottles, and cans go for sorting every year.

At a MRF (pronounced "murph"), mixed recyclables travel through a sophisticated maze of manual and mechanical sorting processes. Once the paper, cardboard, metals, and plastic are separated, they're compressed into 1,000-pound bales and sold to recycling companies to be made into new products and packaging.

Massachusetts' first MRF was built in Springfield in 1991 by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Recently retrofitted to improve its sorting efficiency, the Springfield MRF (SMRF) uses near-infrared (NIR) technology to identify different plastic resin types and then sorts those resin types into distinct bales. In fiscal year 2022, the SMRF sent 1,752 tons of plastic bottles, jars, jugs and tubs to plastics recyclers, including Unifi and KW Plastics. Plastics recyclers wash, grind and pelletize the plastic into post-consumer resin (PCR) which is sold to the packaging, housewares, textiles, automotive, and agricultural products industries to make new products.

How Do We Know the MRFs are Really Recycling:

The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) regulates the activities of MRFs and our enforcement staff conduct regular inspections. MRFs are obligated to report annually to MassDEP (under penalty of perjury) the tons of material they recycled, and, upon request, where the material was sent for recycling. When our inspectors visit, they look at the outbound commodities (paper, plastic, metal, glass) and inspect the "residue" to ensure that it consists of things that are not recyclable.

Don't Believe the Naysayers:

Here's where "only 5% of plastics are being recycled" comes from: If all the plastic products produced in the world – from car bumpers and medical devices to appliances and polyester clothing (see image below) – are lumped together and compared to the plastic that is recycled from residential and commercial recycling programs, you get a recycling rate of 5% or 9% depending on the data source. **(Continued on next page)**

Recycling Commission (Continued)

We argue this number is misleading, because it gives the impression that all of that stuff is designed to be recycled and is meant to be recycled – it isn't. The only plastics that are recyclable in our residential and commercial recycling programs are rigid plastic containers and packaging.

Where We Agree:

We agree that our world is full of plastic and that there's way too much of it. We need to produce and use less, especially the kind we can't recycle and for which there are better alternatives (like Styrofoam). We agree that a lot of perfectly good plastic bottles, jars, jugs, and tubs are not recycled. We also agree that recycling rates need to improve (and we truly hope that these reports don't result in even less recycling)! There are too many areas across the country that do not have equitable access to recycling (40 million U.S. households don't have a recycling option). We agree that recycling is not a panacea for our waste problem, but it IS a valuable tool in the toolkit and should not be dismissed or disparaged. We agree that everything that CAN be recycled, SHOULD be recycled.

So What's Next?:

We need to do better at recycling ALL of the rigid plastic food, beverage and household products containers we can. The plastics recycling industry not only wants these containers and has the capacity to recycle them, but experts say a shortage of recycled plastics will prevent major consumer brands from meeting their sustainable packaging goals and complying with new laws.

At the same time, we need to support efforts to design packaging for recycling. Because there's still lots of plastic packages on our grocery store shelves that aren't recyclable. And that's got to change. The most powerful thing you can do is speak out. Email the company whose product you love, but whose package you can't recycle and ask them to change it. Now more than ever, consumer brands are listening to their customers' demands for sustainable products and packaging.

Recycle Smart:

Use Recycle Smart's Smart Recycling Guide (<https://recyclesmartma.org>) and the Recyclopedia to make sure you're putting the right stuff in your recycling bin. These tools were created by MassDEP and MRF operators to help reduce confusion and "wish-cycling," and to ensure our efforts to separate trash from recycling aren't made in vain. Also please use: Westford Recycling Commission (WRC) | Westford, MA (westfordma.gov/recycling).

Please don't let the headlines fool you. Recycling is happening in MA!

Envision 2050 Focus Groups

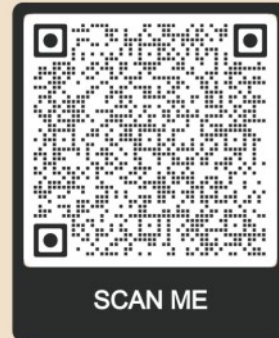
This is an opportunity to help shape the future of transportation in our region as we update the Long Range Regional Transportation Plan.

Envision 2050

BILLERICA CHELMSFORD DRACUT DUNSTABLE LOWELL
PEPPERELL TOWNSBURY TYNCESBOROUGH WESTFORD



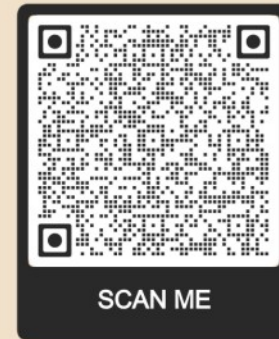
Pedestrian/Bicyclist focus group
January 17, 2023



Scan to register



Transit focus group
January 19, 2023



Scan to register

Visit <https://www.nmcog.org/envision2050> to learn more





The Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG) is embarking on Envision 2050, an update to the Northern Middlesex Metropolitan Planning Organization's (NMMPO) Long-Range Regional Transportation Plan. This is an opportunity to help shape the future of transportation in our region. **Please scan the QR code to be directed to the Envision 2050 survey. For more information, visit <https://www.nmcog.org/envision2050>**

Should you require assistance or have any questions related to this survey, or the transportation planning process, please contact the NMCOG office at 978-454-8021 or contact Justin Howard at jhoward@nmcog.org.



<https://bit.ly/Envision2050>